

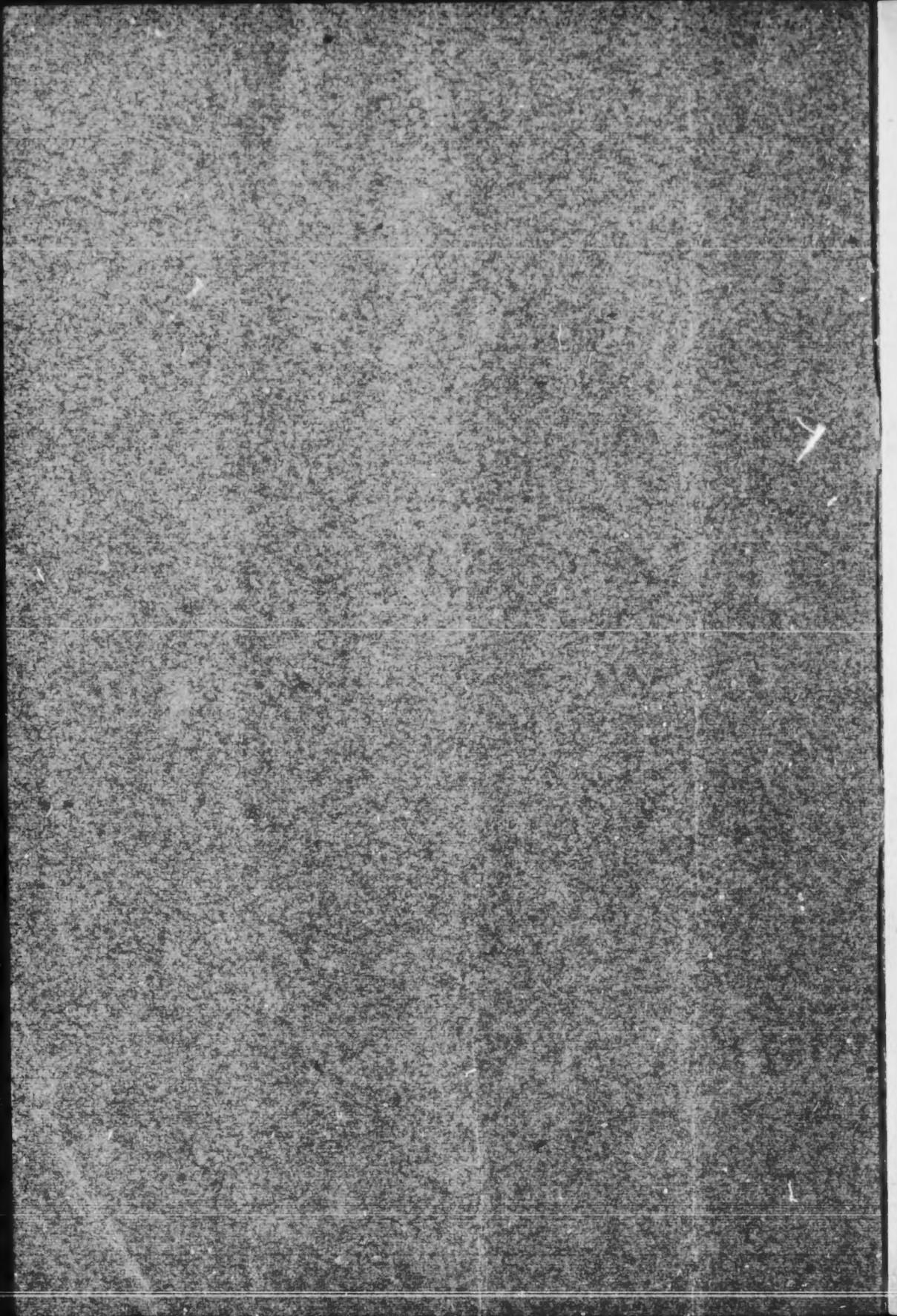
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Sermon
at the
Consecration of Rev. A. U. de Pencier, M.A.
Rector of St. Paul's Church, Vancouver, B.C.
Bishop of New Westminster



Delivered by
REV. C. A. SEAGER, M. A.
[Rector of St. Cyprian's, Toronto]

Vancouver, British Columbia
July 25th, 1910

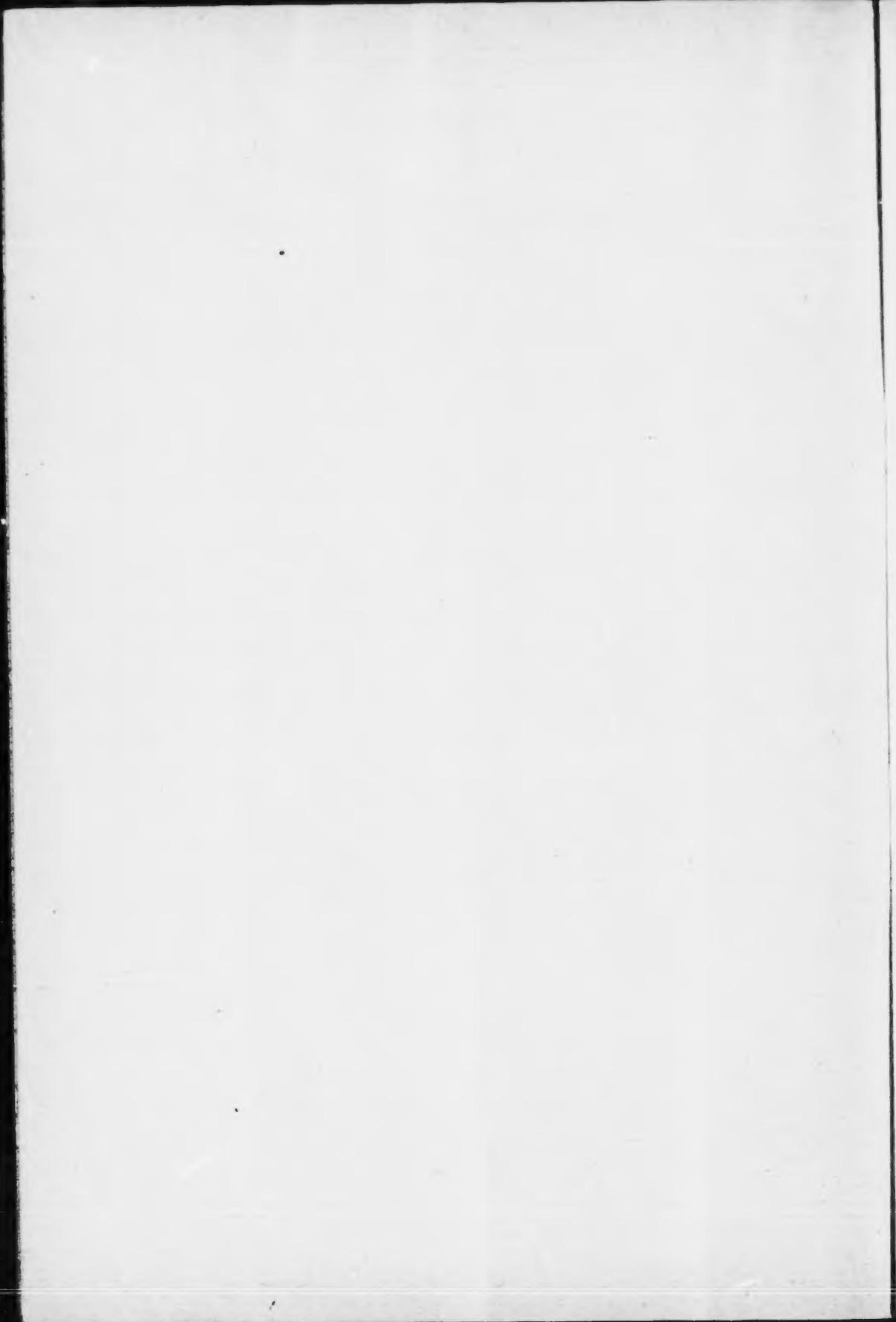


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"Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto Thee the wealth of nations and their kings led with them." (Isaiah 60-11.)



Most Reverend Sir, Right Reverend Sirs, Brethren of the Clergy and Brethren of the Laity:

I speak to you from these words in order to consider not the particular message they convey, but the broad principle which lies behind them. A principle, in fact, the operation of which lies at the basis of the upbuilding of the Church herself and the increase of her influence for God and good in the world.

It is fitting that we should consider any matter which touches the welfare and influence of the Church on the solemn occasion upon which we are assembled today—the consecration of one to that great office which, apart from all doctrinal or theoretical considerations whatsoever, does, as a matter of fact, lie at the foundation of the ecclesiastical edifice of which we are privileged to be parts.

And I am more impelled to speak of such a matter in view of the fact, well understood and deeply felt by all of us, I hope, that upon the life of the Church of England in Canada has dawned a new era and that the time requires that every one of us be absorbingly interested in one single thing—the upbuilding of the Church and the increase of her spiritual influence upon the Canadian people. This is the duty of the hour. All else except as it contributes to this is waste of time and opportunity—the futility of frittered and dissipated energy.

The principle which lies behind the particular message of the text, considered in the light of the fulfilment of this and other like germinal prophecies is perfectly familiar to us all—you may feel that its statement here is commonplace and trite: that the Church of God, the Body of Christ, the Commonwealth of Heaven upon earth is to proceed with respect to her own growth and development, along the line of absorption and assimilation of all that is good within her outer environment; to receive, digest and incorporate into her own being every virtue, every excellence that lies within the wrapping

of the genius of every people with whom she comes in contact in order in the process to increase, from age to age, her output of spiritual power.

But this principle has not only this extensive application. It has also an intensive one. Not only with regard to her outer environment is the Church to proceed along the line of absorption and assimilation, but with regard also to the many movements within her own inner life. Each one, whether it be merely transitory, coming and going within a short decade, or whether it remain within the Church forever, has its own contribution to make to her up building, and that contribution added to her slowly accumulating store of spiritual power is to enable her the more perfectly to complete the edification of the children whom God has given her.

In other words, there is within the Church an amazing and divinely bestowed capacity of universality. Call it what you will. The creeds call it catholicity. This catholicity means much more than merely that all men may enter freely into her fellowship if they will. It means her possession of a positive power of universal and cosmopolitan adaptability and receptivity, both with respect to things without and things within, a furnace fanned by the very breath of God, into which the crude ores of the world-life that surrounds her and the movements within her may be flung, refined and transmuted into the pure gold of increased Christian influence. Open and receptive both to things without and things within, trying the spirits, sifting the good from the bad, the true from the false, assimilating and absorbing the good and the true into her own being, age by age the Church is to increase and develop her own strength in order to fulfil the purpose of her creation, to give out a growing and developing spiritual ministry to man.

Not one of us but is familiar with the idea and operation of this principle

with respect to the Church's outer environment. It is either the dominant note or deep under-tone of most of the missionary addresses we listen to. Her history from one point of view is the record of the operation of her capacity of adaptability to and receptivity of her environment. As nation after nation has come into the Commonwealth of God, the Church, often in spite of herself, has drawn into her own being fresh blood, new life and enlarged spiritual power. The argument for missions is as much that the Church needs the nations of the earth as that the nations of the earth need the Church. It was the missionary journeys of Paul the Apostle, his fellows and successors which flooded the Church with her first tide of large life and the ingathering of the barbarian hordes which overran the Roman Empire that gave her her second. Jew, Greek, Roman, Teuton have each contributed not their Judaism, paganism or heathenism to the Church as some would have us believe, but unless we are to refuse the testimony both of the Bible and of experience—their wealth, the truth, vigor and virtue of their own characteristic genius—into the city of God, and the furnace of her inherent catholicity has refined them into fresh spiritual life. If the process has not resulted as perfectly as it might have done it is indisputably our own fault. What God, the Holy Ghost, would do if men would not prevent His mortal mind cannot conceive. Search our own lives for an instance of this. We have in our own personal experience an epitome of the spiritual history of the Church.

All commonplace and trite this in the hearing, but how vital in the performance, and not, however clearly recognized always characteristic of the Church's action either in the past or the present. The Church has not always been, nor is she now, free from the guilt of disobedience to this divine and fundamental law.

And what is true extensively of the Church's relation to her outer environment is true also with respect to the many movements in her own inner life. Her catholicity is a capacity of absorption and assimilation of home products as well as foreign. How manifold and mighty these movements have been and are! What tremendous upheavals within the Church herself are reflected in the

history of missions ancient and modern, in the history of doctrine ancient and modern. Some of them are vital—throbs of her great deep heart. Some swirl up to the surface from the deep flowing streams of tendencies having their source in the mountain tops of her great Past. Some are merely passing phases of thought, transient gusts of feeling incidental to the passing hour.

Not an age since Paul the Apostle opposed "certain men who came down from Judea," to the present but has beheld a turmoil of inner movements in the Church herself. What does it all mean? Disorder, confusion, disintegration? There have never been wanting the short-sighted, the fearful, the faithless, who have thought so. But the tonic ecclesiastical is ecclesiastical history, as said, in effect, a very distinguished churchman. Pessimism is only another name for ignorance.

What does it all mean? The question is answered by the Past with its reply, "This is what it all did mean," the mighty movement of the Church's inherent capacity of assimilation; the sifting of the wheat from the chaff in movements that arise within her own inner life. It is her inherent catholicity applied intensively, gradually absorbing that which in every movement is present to nourish and enrich her own body; that which makes blood against the spiritual anaemia which, owing to the faithlessness and obstinacy and unspirituality of her own members is her constant and deadliest peril.

All commonplace and trite in the hearing, but how vital in the performance, and surely to be heard and heeded by the Church today as never before. For of movements without and movements within the Church of England in Canada there are many and they are mighty. With regard to movements without, it is a daily wonder in all our minds to behold the thing that is taking place. A giant has been born and sounds of his mighty unfolding life are in the land. He has flung his great limbs across the length and breadth of this continent and is rising up to stretch out hands to join the two ancient civilizations of the Orient and the Occident. Europe has found the way to Cathay after 700 years' searching. Captain Vancouver, thrusting his ship's prow into every indentation along this North Pacific coast, settled forever in the negative the question of a water-

way to Asia through this continent. It has taken our own age of the development of means of transportation and accomplishment of the modern wonder of the crossing of the Rockies to prove that, after all, North America is the stepping stone between Europe and the Orient. And both these ancient civilizations are themselves astir and vibrant with regenerating life whose future forms the mystery of mysteries of the new era now dawning upon the history of the world. We have been born too soon who would see the mystery slowly unfold itself. But this much has been so far revealed—this much of the new world life we already feel—it's vibrant thrills through the life of our own people. The newest nation, cradled and nourished in the bosom of British imperialism, is rapidly assuming her national character, rapidly creating that which has never before existed north of the 50th parallel of latitude—a real and characteristic national environment for the Canadian Church, accumulating those elemental treasures of national genius which purified by the Blood of Christ and consecrated in the Church are to form the nation's contribution to the Church's own increasing development and a just claim upon the Church's fuller spiritual ministry.

The Canadian nation will have an increasing contribution to make to the life of the Canadian Church. What is the latter's attitude towards it? Are her gates open to receive it? Is the innate capacity with which Jesus Christ endowed the Church for this very purpose quick and vigorous in our own section of it? Is she to gather an ever-growing strength, to beat with a fuller and fuller life, to be capable of a mightier output of spiritual ministry among our people? I am not asking what her intentions or designs are. The way to hell is paved with good intentions, behind which there is no sincere spirit of fulfilment.

What is the Canadian church to do about this new environment? All such questions are answered not by protestation and assertion, it is possible to protest too much—but by the fact of whether or no a true inner spirit be actually ruling in the Church herself: a spirit which is permitting her capacity of catholicity to work intensively, for if the Church's gates be not open

to things within, how can they be open to things without?

Let us hold a glass before ourselves, and ask what this spirit should be.

It will be a spirit of expectancy. As the original One Hundred and Twenty waited with straining hearts in Jerusalem for the fulfilment of the great promise which they had heard of Christ, so the heart of the true Church will be ever strained outward, and as she hears the tramp of oncoming hosts which will fill the plains of the Middle West and the fertile valleys of your own province, the Canadian church must look outward with expectancy. Nothing more deadly for the individual or the Church than exaggerated introspection. Nothing more pitiable than the mutterings of abnormal self-consciousness. The Church of Jesus Christ must look out, not in; up, not down. There must be no spirit of morbid self-consciousness, but like the Church at Pentecost, the spirit of expectancy, waiting for the infusion of new life. The sin of Judea was the sin of exaggerated introspection. God save us from its presence and its punishment.

It will be a spirit of patient magnanimity. The spirit which believes in the divine revelation and indestructibility of Truth will not be impatient or afraid of the apparent errors and mistakes that people and groups of people seem to make. Some people are so terribly afraid of error. But the Church which has the true spirit will not fear error. She will rip the husk off from the kernel of truth that lies within and make that truth her own, as she has ever done in the past. It may be hard to believe but in this sense the Church has been feeding on error as well as the food of truth this couple of thousand years. The peril of the Church lies not in the excrescences of error on the movements that rise up within her, but in the absence of the patient Christian magnanimity which guides the truth into the full light.

It will be a spirit of fellowship—fellowship that springs from the consciousness of oneness in the Body of Christ, oneness in spiritual kinship, oneness in the objects for which the Church exists. I believe the lost art of fellowship in the Church of Jesus Christ in the twentieth century marks her farthest departure from the Apostolic spirit. I fear breaches of this fundamental of Christianity

more than any error that ever reared its head. I fear the suspicion and misunderstanding that breed from aloofness of individuals and groups of individuals in the Church more than Satan himself and all his host.

It will be a spirit of sacrificial service; the spirit of Him who said "The Son of Man is come not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many; the spirit of Him who rose from supper, laid aside His garments, took a towel, girded His loins and began to wash His disciples' feet; the spirit of Him whose last message was a direction to serve. Oh, this wondrous spirit of service. It lifts the feeble hands to great tasks. It welds stranger to stranger in bonds of a new fraternity in the house of God. It calls out unsuspected depths of power in individuals and glorifies God by the results He is able to produce by our instrumentality. The spirit of doing something, anything for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us—God gave us the spirit of service;

Finally, it will be a spirit of heavenly mindedness that tries to see all things from God's point of view, that lifts all things up into the atmosphere of God's presence, a spirit to which the verities, the permanencies, the essentials of life are the things of the Spirit. He cannot be petty who lives within the limitless realm of the eternities of God. He cannot hate who kneels ever at the footstool of eternal Love.

These are some of the manifestations of a true inner spirit in the Church of God. The Church which has this spirit is the Church which is ready to meet for the Master's use; ready to receive the contents of its surroundings and the movements that rise up within itself and to purify and cleanse them and make their gifts her own.

Is this the spirit of the Canadian Church? I shall not answer that question. For in a last analysis this is a personal matter, like everything else. It is for each one of us to test our individual life and try our own spirit. It is for each, in the quiet sanctuary of his own hours of thought, meditation and prayer, to ask a fresh infusion of the Holy Ghost that we may measure up a little nearer towards Him who is the embodiment of all the excellencies, human and divine, the

great Redeemer and dear Friend who has shown us what we ought to be and stands ready to give us of His inexhaustible grace. By His help we individuals can become more perfect parts of the great Body of Christ—more loyal and worthy citizens of the Kingdom of God; more potent factors in the great sum total of the life of His Holy Catholic Church.

And you, reverend sir, my fellow student of days gone by; my friend tried and proven by twenty years, what words can I direct towards you? I may not follow my own inclination any say all that is in my heart; that were too personal for this occasion.

First, I want to express the deep gratitude it gives us all that the first Bishop of the Canadian Church consecrated on this Pacific coast is a Canadian. It is unnecessary to say that in this remark I cast no reflection upon those who have gone before, those who laboured here before this beautiful city sprang into being, nor upon those noble efforts and noble gifts which have been made and are being made by the Mother Church of the English race.

Nay, it must be a deep joy to those in the old land who have interested themselves in the upbuilding of the Canadian Church to see, as an evidence and proof of the worth and success of their efforts, that he who is to be consecrated today is a son of the daughter Church which England has been at such pains to nourish. Who is there who will not rejoice at such a thing? Certainly not the Church of a people who with a wondrous faith and far-sightedness ventured to give self-government to a recently conquered people and is already receiving the reward of that act of faith and trust.

Then I desire to express to you that which is in the heart of all here and in the hearts of thousands more throughout the length and breadth of Canada—that which is as warm nowhere save in your own diocese as in the hearts of the people of your former scene of labour and my own—the diocese of Toronto—our earnest wish for God's richest blessing upon your work. It is a great work, indeed. The giant born in this Canada of ours which is reaching out to join Orient and Occident has in this, your own diocese and city, an outstretched, open and beckoning hand. The riches of east

and west are filling it with their gifts. It will be your privilege and high duty to see to it that by every effort of brain and heart and will which you can bring to bear that hand is not left empty of whatever better spiritual gifts — and they are rich indeed—the Church of England has to bestow. The work is so great, so difficult, involves such insight and such outlook, such a knowledge of the tendencies of the time, such an accurate measure of the movements of the hour, such a looking for opportunities and ability to seize them as they arise, that the man is not born who can accomplish it of himself. Therefore it is in our hearts to say, "The blessing of God be with you; the Presence of Him who stood beside St Paul in a vision in the "night watches" and bade him be of good cheer, be ever constantly felt by you; the uplift of the life of God the Spirit be the experience of the work of your every day. Who is sufficient for these things? None but He who is the Creator of worlds, the Providence of the nations, the Ruler of human events since human events began. He is the giver of the increase but He bestows upon Paul and Apollos alibity to plant and to water. May He give you grace to plant and

water here so that the future harvest may be glorious.

And of you, my brethren of this diocese, I bespeak on behalf of your new Bishop that loyalty and support which is of the very essence of true churchmanship as it is understood by the Church of England. It will doubtless be necessary for him to demand of you as it is always necessary for any leader to demand of his followers, not only your material support but your loyalty; your loyalty sometimes when the way before you in the great campaign is not clear, your trust when at times it may seem as if he were leading wrong, your confidence at times when there may seem to be no grounds for confidence save your belief in the man himself and the general rightness of his ends. Such loyalty is required in every true churchman. Such loyalty will override mistakes, the short sightedness, the weakness which mar the work of the ablest, of the best, and will issue in victories and triumphant success for the great Cause for which we fight, the upbuilding of the kingdom of our Blessed Lord and the salvation of the precious souls for whom He gave His blood.



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